



Rhode Island Department of Health

3 Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908 | www.health.ri.gov

For: Immediate release

Date: March 13, 2020

Contact: [Joseph Wendelken](mailto:Joseph.Wendelken@health.ri.gov) (401-378-0704)

For ASL version, click local TV stations:

ABC6 <https://www.abc6.com/r-i-schools-closed-for-a-week-and-9-new-covid-19-cases-confirmed/>

FOX11 <https://www.wpri.com/health/coronavirus/friday-afternoon-coronavirus-update-rhode-island/>

NBC10 <https://turnto10.com/news/local/raimondo-alexander-scott-to-provide-coronavirus-update>

CBS12 <https://www.wpri.com/health/coronavirus/friday-afternoon-coronavirus-update-rhode-island/>

CDI: Charly Thorn Sr.; Feeder/Interpreter: Heather Anderson

Broad Measures Announced to Prevent COVID-19 Transmission in Rhode Island

Measures pertain to schools, nursing homes, and international travelers

As Rhode Island continues to respond to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Governor Gina M. Raimondo announced a set of broad measures today intended to limit or prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Rhode Island. These measures pertain to schools, nursing homes, and anyone who has traveled internationally in the last 14 days.

The announcement of these measures is coming as Rhode Island is announcing an additional nine cases of COVID-19. These people include four males and five females. There are three pediatric cases and six adult cases. While the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is still investigating each of these cases, we know that four unrelated trips were involved: travel to Europe, travel to the Bahamas, travel to Jamaica, and regional travel (to Massachusetts).

All of these people are recovering at home, except for one person who is recovering in their nursing home. This person is in isolation there. Staff are using appropriate personal protective measures and strict infection control measures.

“Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is Rhode Island’s highest priority right now and we are all coming together to put all of our resources toward reaching that goal,” said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. “I have to thank my entire Cabinet for working around the clock on this to ensure that the measures we are putting in place will help prevent further spread of the disease and protect all Rhode Islanders. We have been preparing for this, and our extensive planning efforts are serving us well. We all have a role to play in this, and I thank everyone for doing their part.”

Governor Raimondo announced today that:

- School vacation week in Rhode Island is being moved from April to the week of March 16th. During this time, teachers and other school staff are urged to remain local. The change in school vacation week is to limit spread of COVID-19 while allowing schools and districts to work with the Rhode Island Department of Education on their distance learning plans. It will also allow schools and districts to prepare to make meals available to at-risk students where possible, in the event we need to move to distance learning. Schools should also use next week to clean and disinfect all surfaces in their buildings. A decision will be made at the end of next week about what to do the following week.
- All people who have traveled anywhere internationally in the last 14 days (and going forward) are being urged to self-quarantine. That means not going to work, not going to school, and staying home.
- All Rhode Islanders are being urged to avoid all crowded places, large events, and mass gatherings. This is social distancing. However, people should continue doing essential errands (such as going to the grocery store).
- Nursing home administrators have been directed to not allow any visitors (unless they are essential to the care of a resident). Additionally, nursing home administrators have been directed to continue actively screening staff, vendors, and all other people who enter facilities for illness and COVID-19 risks (for example, travel history or exposure to someone under investigation for COVID-19).

Childcare facilities are urged to remain open at this time.

“As I said earlier in the week, now is the time for us to use all of the strategies we have available to us to curb the spread of disease,” said Director of Health Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH. “We realize that for this to work, we are all going to have to sacrifice, and we must do it consistently, together. We understand fully that social distancing and following these measures creates challenges for us all, yet these are the best methods we have to contain the spread of disease. By following this guidance, which is based on proven science, we can help protect our whole community, and especially our older adults and our most vulnerable populations.”

Data updates

These numbers are also [available online](#).

- Number of Rhode Island COVID-19 positive (including presumptive positive) cases: 14
- Number of people who had negative test results at RIDOH’s State Health Laboratories: 142
- Number of people for whom tests are pending: 29

- Number of people who are currently instructed to self-quarantine in Rhode Island because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19: approximately 500

Testing in Rhode Island is being done at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories. Confirmatory testing is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Positive results are considered 'presumptive' if they still need to be confirmed by the CDC.

Key messages for the public

- If you have traveled anywhere internationally in the last 14 days, self-quarantine for 14 days. That means do not go to work or school and stay at home.
- Whenever possible, avoid close personal contact with people in public. When greeting people avoid handshakes and hugs. [Additional guidance](#) is available from CDC.
- Although Rhode Island has the testing capacity it needs, people without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency). Healthcare providers have a dedicated number that they are then using to consult with RIDOH on potential COVID-19 cases.
- Early data suggest that older adults are twice as likely to experience serious COVID-19 illness. RIDOH is reiterating CDC's guidance for people older than 60 years of age:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - When greeting people avoid handshakes and hugs.
 - Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
 - Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
 - More information is [available from CDC](#).
- People with general, non-medical questions about COVID-19 can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid, write to RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov, or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public. The Hotline will be staffed this weekend from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm both Saturday and Sunday. (After hours people are being directed to call 211.)
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
 - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.

- Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.